

University Council Minutes

April 1, 2024

3:30 PM

Creativity and Innovation District Building Multipurpose Library (Room 104) and Zoom

Present: Joe Merola (presiding), April Myers, Kim O'Rourke, Amy Sebring, Byan Garey, Frances Keene, Aimée Surprenant, Rachel Holloway, Susan Sumner for Alan Grant, Daniel Givens, Debra Stoudt for Laura Belmonte, Tsai Lu Liu, Kevin Pitts, Paul Winistorfer, Julia Ross, Saonee Sarker, Lee Learman, Tyler Walters, Rachel Miles for Robert Weiss, Evan Lavender-Smith, Holli Gardner Drewry for Janice Austin, Stephanie Trout, Jennifer Jones, LaTawnya Burleson, Callan Bartel, Kari Evans, Kiera Schneiderman, Shahed Sanuri, Alex Efrid, Rachel Maizel, Yohan Sequeira, Ranald Adams for Riley DeHority, Emily Tirrell, Nicole Pitterson, Stuart Feigenbaum, Rodney Gaines, Charles Lowery, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Renee LeClair, Serena Young, Amber Robinson, Sally Shupe, Melissa Faircloth, Kelly Oaks, John Gray Williams, Eric Glenn, & Kim Rhodes for Dave Close

Absent with notice: Tim Sands, Cyril Clarke, Gary Long, & William Storey

Absent: Daniel Sui, Menah Pratt, Paul Knox, Dwayne Edwards, Natalia Guerrero, Daniel Hindman, & Lujean Baab

Guests: Hudson Aikins, Lori Rose, Ron Fricker, Debbie Greer, Kat Nelson, Dee Dee Somervell, Rick Sparks, Stacey Wilkerson, Dee Harris, Harrison Blythe, Pascha Gerni, & Arianna Schuler Scott

Dr. Merola called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. A quorum was present.

1. Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda. The motion carried.

2. Announcement of approval and posting of minutes of March 18, 2024

Dr. Merola noted that these minutes have been voted on electronically and can be publicly accessed on the Governance Information System on the Web (<http://www.governance.vt.edu>).

3. Unfinished Business

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Resolution CFA 2023-24B
Resolution to Approve Revised Extension Faculty Tracks

Evan Lavender-Smith presented the resolution for second reading and made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded, and the motion passed.

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Resolution CFA 2023-24C
Resolution to Form a Task Force to Study Instructor Workloads and Salaries

Evan Lavender-Smith presented the resolution for second reading and made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded, and the motion passed.

University Council
Resolution UC 2023-24B
Resolution to Revise the University Council Constitution

Kim O'Rourke presented the resolution for second reading and made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded, and the motion passed. The resolution will be sent to the five senates for ratification. Three out of five senates will need to vote in favor of ratifying the resolution for it to move forward in the approval process to the President and Board of Visitors.

4. New Business

Commission on Graduate and Professional Student Affairs
Resolution CGPSA 2023-24A
Resolution to Protect Against Caste & Caste-Based Discrimination

Ranald Adams presented the resolution for first reading. Virginia Tech's current anti-discrimination policy does not explicitly cover caste and caste-based discrimination. This resolution will update Policy 1025 to include protection against caste-based discrimination and will add a definition of caste to the policy.

A deferral was requested to give the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity (CEOD), the Office for Equity and Accessibility (OEA), and the university legal counsel an opportunity to review and discuss the resolution.

Although members of GPSS or CGPSA had reached out to OEA and CEOD in recent months, the consultation with OEA occurred before the resolution was developed, and CEOD has not yet discussed the resolution but plans to do so at its next meeting. CEOD's charge includes policy matters related to diversity and inclusion, and that commission has a long-standing request to be consulted on any such resolutions that do not originate in CEOD. The Commission on Graduate and Professional Student Affairs was previously unaware that university legal counsel review was necessary.

It was stated that the Office of Equity and Accessibility (OEA) has institutional compliance responsibility as it relates to Policy 1025, and OEA has determined that the language in Policy 1025 as it relates to non-discrimination categories is broad and interpreted to be inclusive of caste. OEA is also in the process of rolling out a revised training program for Policy 1025 which will state explicitly that the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of national origin includes caste discrimination.

A suggestion was made to include caste in the current policy just to make sure that it doesn't get overlooked even if the current language is inclusive of caste discrimination.

There being no further discussion, the resolution is deferred and will be brought back for second reading and vote no later than the May 6, 2024, meeting. The expectation is that CGPSA will be consulting with the following people/entities to ensure that the resulting resolution and proposed changes to Policy 1025 will be considered satisfactory by CGPSA as well as:

- CEOD – Melissa Faircloth/Stacey Wilkerson.
- Office for Equity and Accessibility - Kelly Oaks
- University Legal Counsel - Kay Heidbreder. Although attorneys are employed throughout the university in various capacities, the attorneys in the Legal Counsel office also are special assistant attorneys general, and it is that office that has the responsibility for providing legal advice to the university.

5. Announcement of Approval and Posting of UC Cabinet, Commission, and Committee Minutes

These minutes have been voted on electronically and will be posted on the University web (<http://www.governance.vt.edu>). Note that the purpose of voting on minutes of the University Council Cabinet, Commissions, and Committees reporting to University Council Cabinet is to accept them for filing. University Council Bylaws require that policy items be brought forward in resolution form for University Council action.

- Commission on Undergraduate Student Affairs
November 9, 2023
November 30, 2023
January 18, 2024
- Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies
February 26, 2024
March 11, 2024
- Commission on Research
February 8, 2024

Budgeting and Planning Committee
February 23, 2024

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 3:54 p.m.